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ABSTRACT

THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THIS DOCUMENT: And you thought you'd tried every trick in the book to cut student absenteeism. You haven't. Now that computers have become an accepted feature in many schools' administrative offices, you might want to check out a new, computerized telephone system that six Chicago schools are using. Each of the schools has installed a machine that telephones parents to alert them that their child was absent from school that day. The principal simply records a message on the machine, and the computer automatically dials parents at a specified hour, usually in the evening. The message goes something like this: "Good evening. I'm Tom Jones, principal of Central High School. I am calling to let you know that your child was absent from school today. Please call the attendance officer at 555-1212 tomorrow between 8 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. to explain the absence." The machine can make 50 calls per hour. If no one answers the telephone at a student's home, the machine will try twice more. The next morning, a printout allows the attendance officer to see which parents received--and which ones missed--the calls. Each machine costs approximately $7,800, but the Chicago school board expects the devices to pay for themselves in 15 months. That's because when school attendance improves--it's expected to go up approximately 3 percent--schools will earn more state aid. After conducting a tryout last fall in two schools with especially high absenteeism, attendance increased from 78.8 percent to 85.6 percent. Reprinted, with permission, from "The Executive Educator," August. Copyright 1983, "The Executive Educator." All rights reserved. (Author)

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'Hi. Your kid cut class today. At the tone, . . .'

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